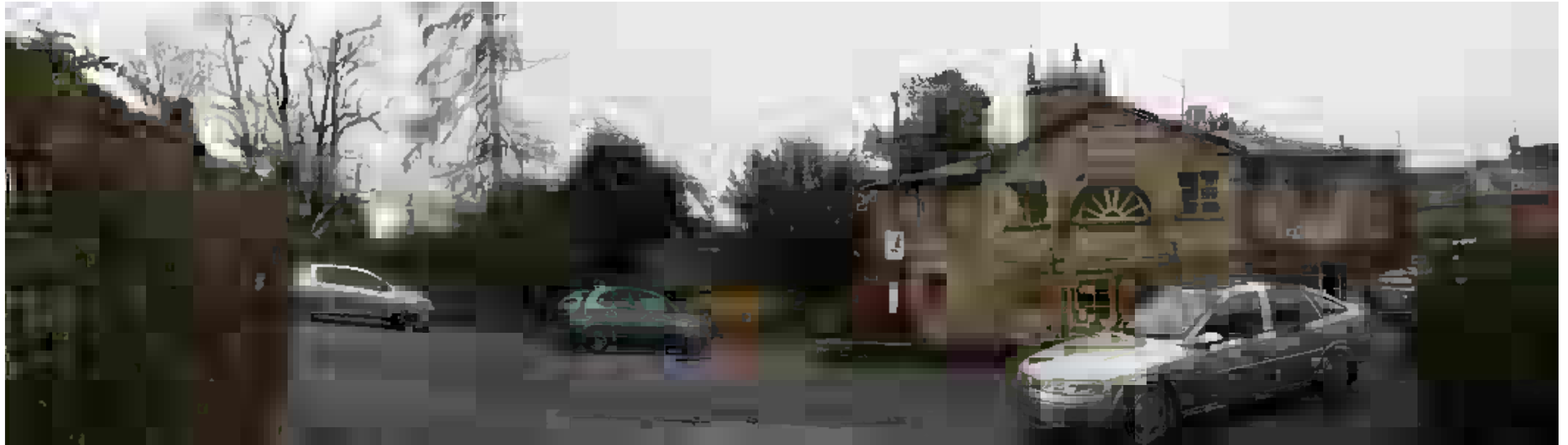


Blockley Village Shop & Café

Proposed Replacement Shop



Landscape Impact Assessment

March 2011

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1. Introduction & Site Location

- 1.1 Blockley Village Shop & Cafe have appointed Portus + Whitton, landscape architects, to assess the landscape setting implications involved in building new premises for the Village Shop and Cafe in the centre of Blockley Village.
- 1.2 This report describes the existing landscape of the site and its wider setting. It explains the proposals for the new shop and cafe and assesses the visual and physical impacts on the landscape that may result from these proposals.
- 1.3 The Application Site is located in the centre of the village of Blockley close to the existing Shop adjacent to the Parish Church. See **Fig 1**.
- 1.4 The site sits centrally within the Blockley Conservation Area on Bell Lane close to the existing Village Shop. It currently accommodates the public lavatories which sit at the north eastern entrance to the churchyard of St. Peter & St. Paul's Parish Church.
- 1.5 An arboricultural survey of important trees in and around the site has been conducted by Crawshaw Environmental. Their report has informed the design process and its findings have been incorporated into this report.

2. Approach & Methodology

- 2.1 The approach may be summarised as follows:
 - Identification of the study area and its planning context.
 - Identification of the Constraints & Opportunities likely to influence the design process.
 - Description of the proposals, identification of the key sources of any likely beneficial or negative impacts and proposed mitigation measures.
 - Identification and assessment of the physical and visual impacts that the proposed development would have on the existing landscape and on visual amenity.
 - Identification and assessment of residual impacts.

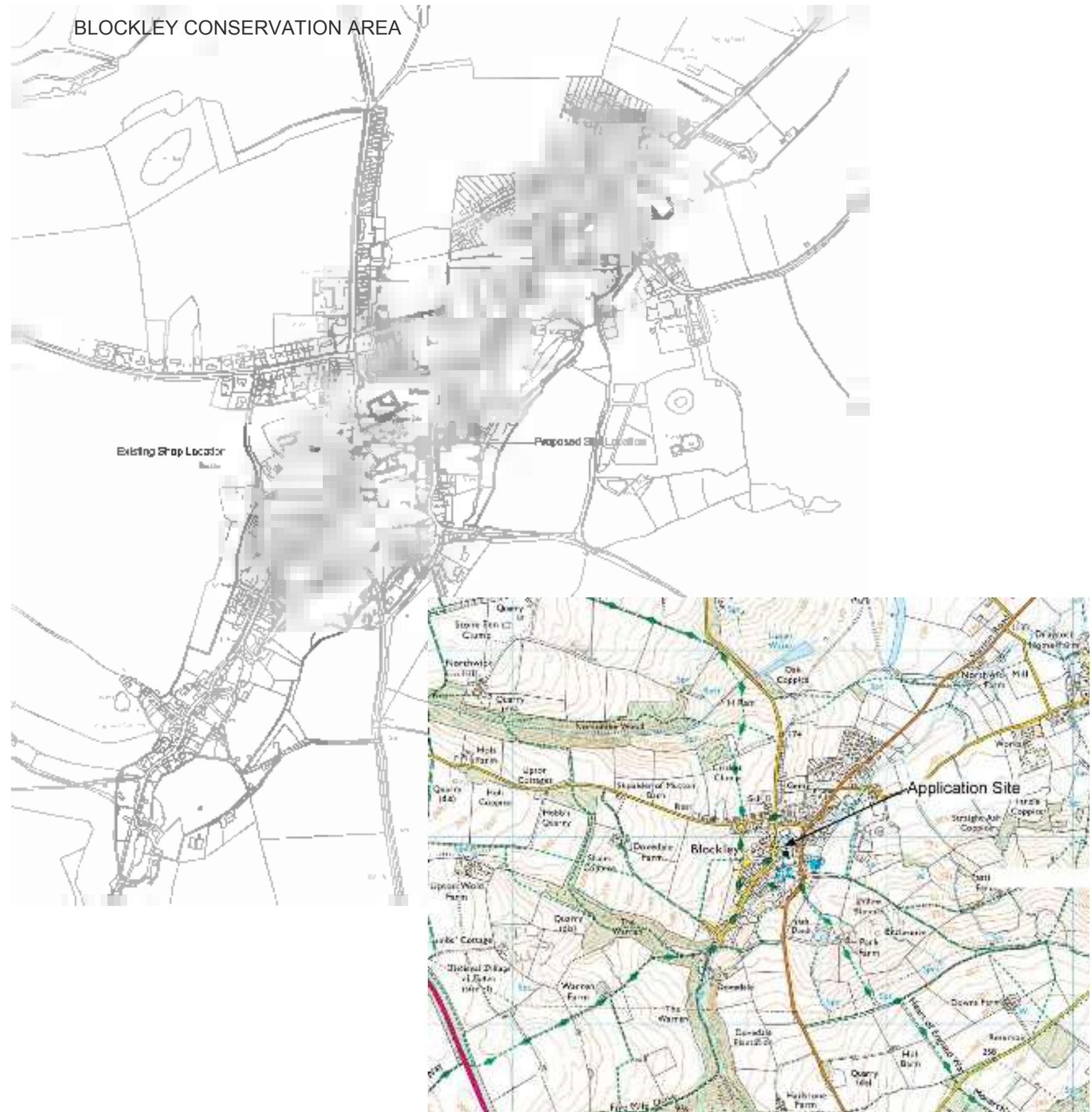


Fig 1: Site Location

3. Planning Context

3.1 Both the existing and proposed sites for the Blockley Village Shop & Cafe are sited within the Blockley Conservation Area as defined by Cotswold District Council. The conservation area was first designated on 30th November 1976 and the boundary was altered on 25 September 1990 and 25 March 1997.

3.2 The Blockley Conservation Area Statement (April 1998) provides guidance on how the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of Blockley Conservation Area can be achieved. It should be read in conjunction with the Cotswold District Local Plan, the Gloucester County Structure Plan and National Policy Guidance especially Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15) - Planning and the Historic Environment. The statement was adopted by CDC as supplementary planning guidance on 25 March 1997.

3.3 The statement subdivides the conservation area into four distinct areas based loosely upon identifiable periods of village development. The application site is located in Area 1 described in the statement as follows:

1– The church, manor house and Churchill Close, including St. George's Terrace and Park Road.

3.4 Closer analysis of each area is provided in the statement and of the area local to the application site it has the following to say:

“Above the churchyard, alongside Bell Lane, a fine row of lime trees enclose one side of Churchill Close, extending from the bus shelter and war memorial down into the village. In the summer, this part of the village is dominated by these trees which help frame the view down the slight hill closed by the classical former school building.

A pleasant setting is given to the triangular area in front of this former school by the walls of Churchill Close, the low stone-built outbuilding (which is in fact the public lavatories), and a very sympathetic garage block in the style of a dovecote which won a Civic Trust Award. The red K6-type telephone kiosk is very prominently sited just by the entrance to the churchyard, and is also a key feature here. Opposite these and angled back are the Georgian Paxton House, set back behind its garden wall and hedge, and the Post Office.”

3.5 Keyed maps of the conservation area accompany the statement and provide additional detail on features of importance. An extract showing the area around the application site is shown in **Fig. 2**. In summary it highlights the following as features of importance:

- The listed buildings of the Church of St. Peter & St. Paul, Mill Close, Paxton House and the neighbouring former Post Office, the former School building (which houses the current Village Shop) and to a lesser extent the listed buildings associated with The Square including the Vicarage.

- The churchyard which is highlighted as ‘an area of landscape value or important green open space’ containing ‘significant footpaths’.
- The walls adjacent to the Dovecote and Public Lavatories designated as ‘important hedges wall and banks’.
- The view from the Manor House towards the church is highlighted as important.

3.6 Finally the statement issues design guidance in respect of the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area as follows:

- New buildings or extensions should reflect the general pattern of building in Blockley especially in scale and proportion, although there is scope for some architectural invention provided that this echoes Blockley architecture.
- Materials should be in accordance with those traditionally used in the particular part of the conservation area, and should maintain a similar mix.
- Any new building or extension should be located on its site in a similar way to the general pattern of building in that part of the area, for example building directly onto the street in certain parts of the High Street.
- Boundary walls and railings should be incorporated in the development in a similar way to those already in existence in that part of the area, and these should use similar materials and detailing.

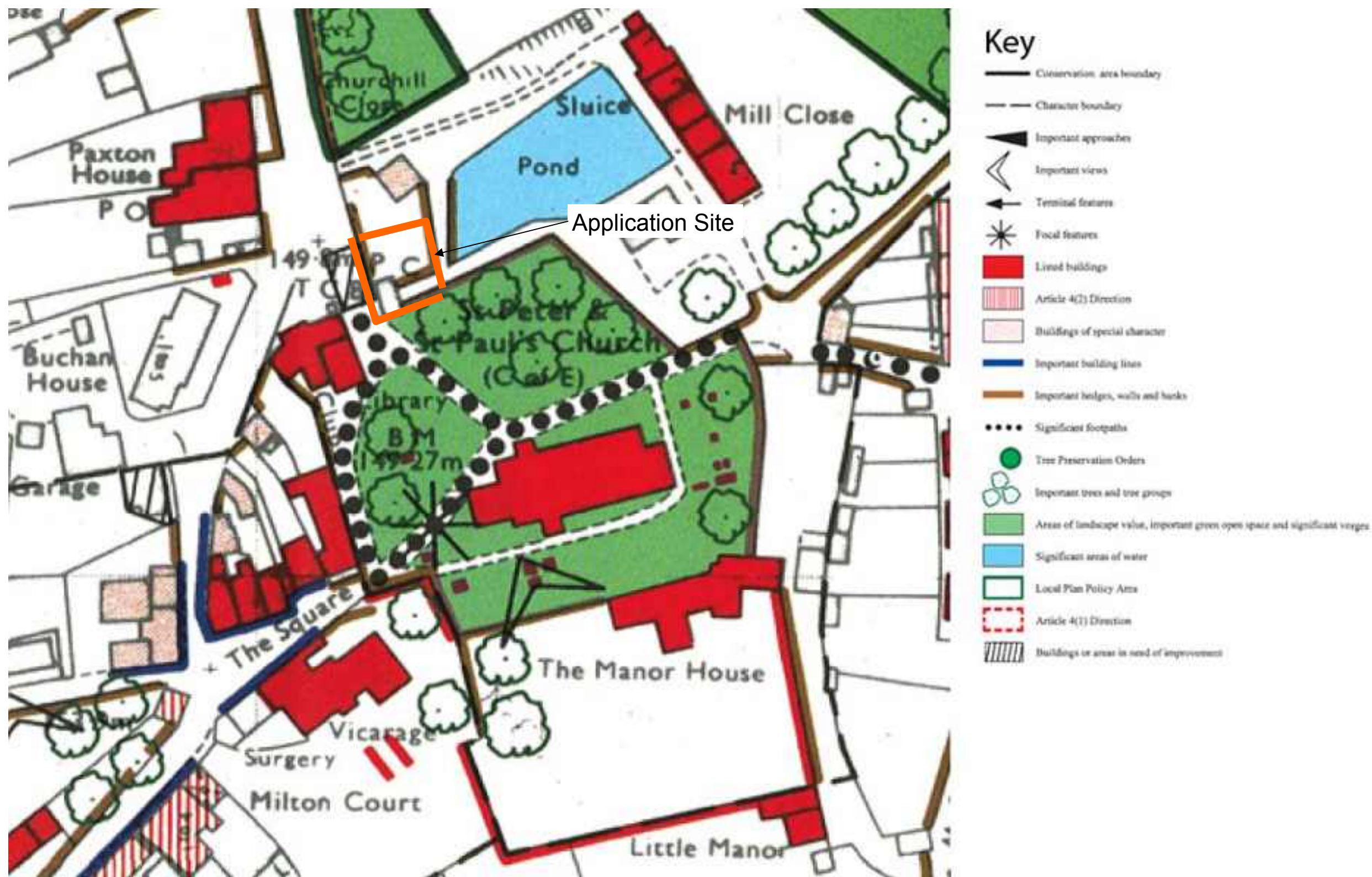


Fig 2: Blockley Conservation Area—extract from Blockley Conservation Area Statement (not to scale)

4. Existing Features

- 4.1 The application site covers an area of approx. 220 m².
- 4.2 Vegetation on site is limited to two trees, an apple and a larch, and various low value shrubs. The Arboricultural Survey has found the trees to be of negative value due to various issues of disease and or rot and should therefore be removed.
- 4.3 Of greater importance are the trees bordering the application site within the Church grounds. These consist of two Yews and a Portugal Laurel. The trees play an important role in screening the churchyard from Bell Lane and provide a backdrop to the existing building containing the public lavatories.
- 4.4 Additional vegetation associated with Mill Close and the large pond provides screening just outside the site's eastern boundary.
- 4.4 The only building on site is a stone, gable ended structure which is set back slightly from the street and houses the public lavatories. The finished floor level (FFL) of this building is some 300 to 400mm below that of the adjacent street and is accessed by two flights of steps.
- 4.5 The site boundaries largely consist of Cotswold stone walls. These are of an indeterminate age but nonetheless have been highlighted as 'important' within the Conservation Area Statement.
- 4.6 A small area of the application site is currently within the boundary of The Dovecote . This includes a Cotswold stone wall and bitmac surfacing.
- 4.7 The site is privately owned and there is no access to any part of the application site to members of the public other than into the public lavatories.

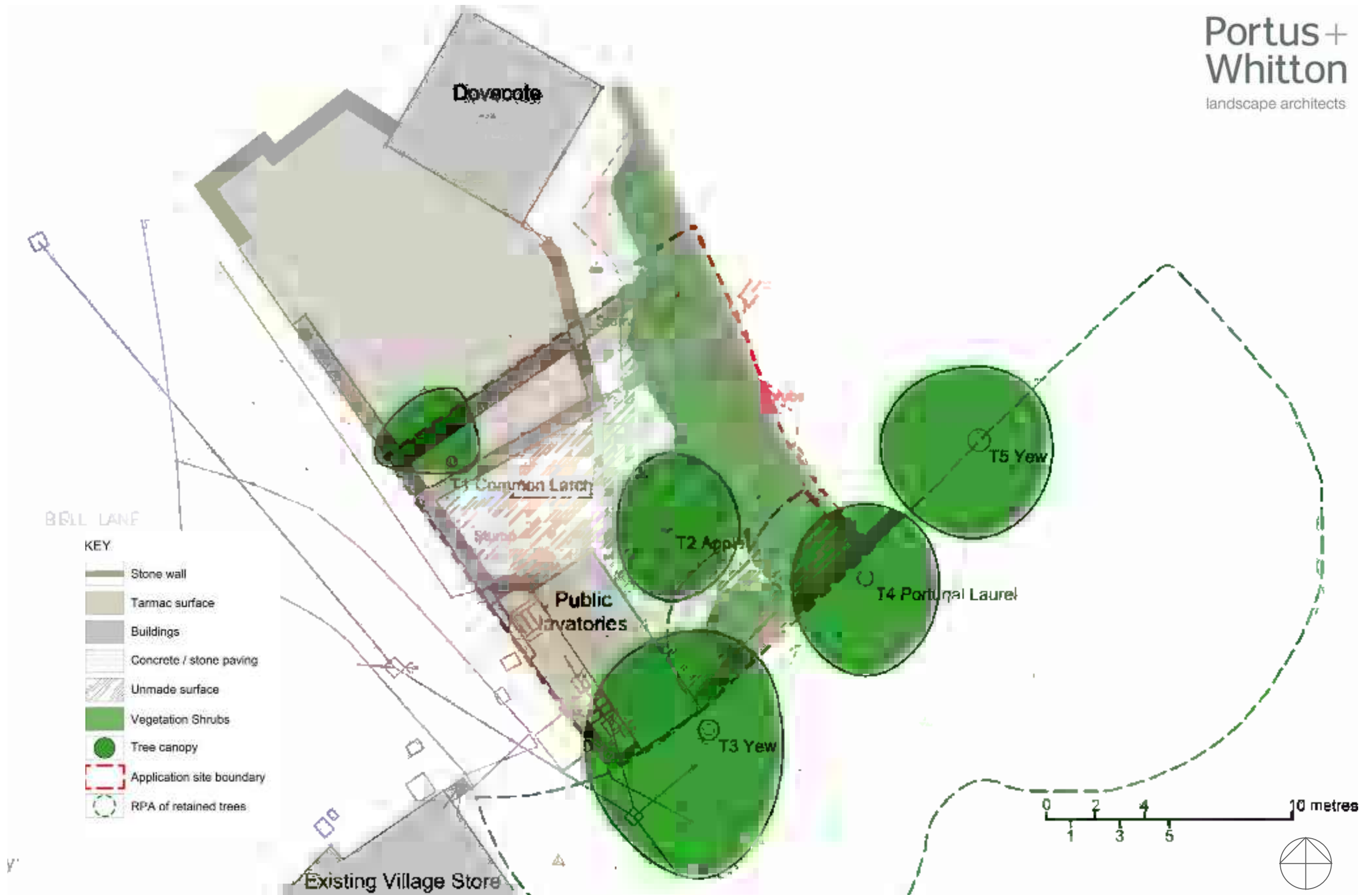


Fig 3: Application Site – Existing Features (not to scale)

5. Constraints & Opportunities

Constraints:

- 5.1 The application site is located within the Blockley Conservation Area and any development would have implications for the setting of the Parish Church, other nearby listed buildings and the well being of important nearby trees.
- 5.2 Existing boundary walls are identified as important in the Blockley Conservation Area Statement.
- 5.3 The two trees currently within the application site (T1 and T2 as identified by the arboricultural report) would need to be removed. However, conclusions reached by the report show the following:
 - T1 Common Larch has a compromised value and its roots are causing structural damage to surrounding structures.
 - T2 Apple is in decline with probably less than 10 years useful life and should be considered for removal.
- 5.4 Other trees offsite (namely T3, T4 and T5 as identified by the arboricultural report) will have root systems extending into the site. The root protection areas (RPA) of these trees have been identified in the arboricultural report taking into consideration any physical barriers and the 20% offset allowance in accordance with section 5.2.4 of BS5837. The RPAs identified by the arboricultural report are shown in Figures 3, 4 and 5.
- 5.5 The application site is relatively small and groundwork/excavations will require careful management.

Opportunities:

- 5.6 The existing trees, particularly those associated with the Churchyard, provide an important backdrop for the application site when viewed from the north and west. There is an opportunity to not only retain these trees but to their future potential. By enhancing their vigour and longevity the natural visual separation between the application site and Church will be improved.
- 5.7 Other listed buildings are visually separated from the site from most view points (i.e. the views do not form a contiguous building group). This is explored further in the Views Analysis (section 7).
- 5.8 The opportunity exists to provide better approach views of this part of the village particularly when travelling south towards the site along Bell Lane. This can be best

achieved by employing an architectural language in keeping with existing vernacular which better suits the scale and character of adjacent buildings.

- 5.9 Visual evidence would suggest that the existing walls around the boundary of the application site have been structurally compromised by the existing trees. This is confirmed by the findings of the arboricultural report. The opportunity exists to renovate / repair these walls and incorporate them (and additional new walls) into the new development.
- 5.10 There is evidence of poor management to certain trees whilst others have not been managed at all. This is particularly so with T3 (Yew) within the churchyard which has suffered severe pruning in the past leaving it with a compromised shape and a susceptibility to disease (as recorded in the arboricultural report). The opportunity exists to put in place a programme of sympathetic management for the future longevity and vigour of all trees.
- 5.11 The arboricultural survey has identified that the root systems of retained trees will extend to a greater or lesser degree into the application site. The opportunity exists for the new development to employ a system construction that:
 - A) Identifies the location of the major roots through on site investigation.
 - B) Locates pile foundations for the new building avoiding these previously identified roots.
 - C) Ensures the building over-sails the major roots systems leaving a suitable, ventilated air gap that allows the continued transfer of oxygen into the root system.
 - D) employs a method of irrigation (e.g. directing harvested rain water) to the roots.

This will help ensure the continued survival of the retained trees whilst also providing a protected root zone (beneath the building) for future exploitation of the trees root systems.

- 5.12 By positioning the new building level with the street the public lavatories will become more accessible to users with disabilities and comply with Part M of the Building Regulations.

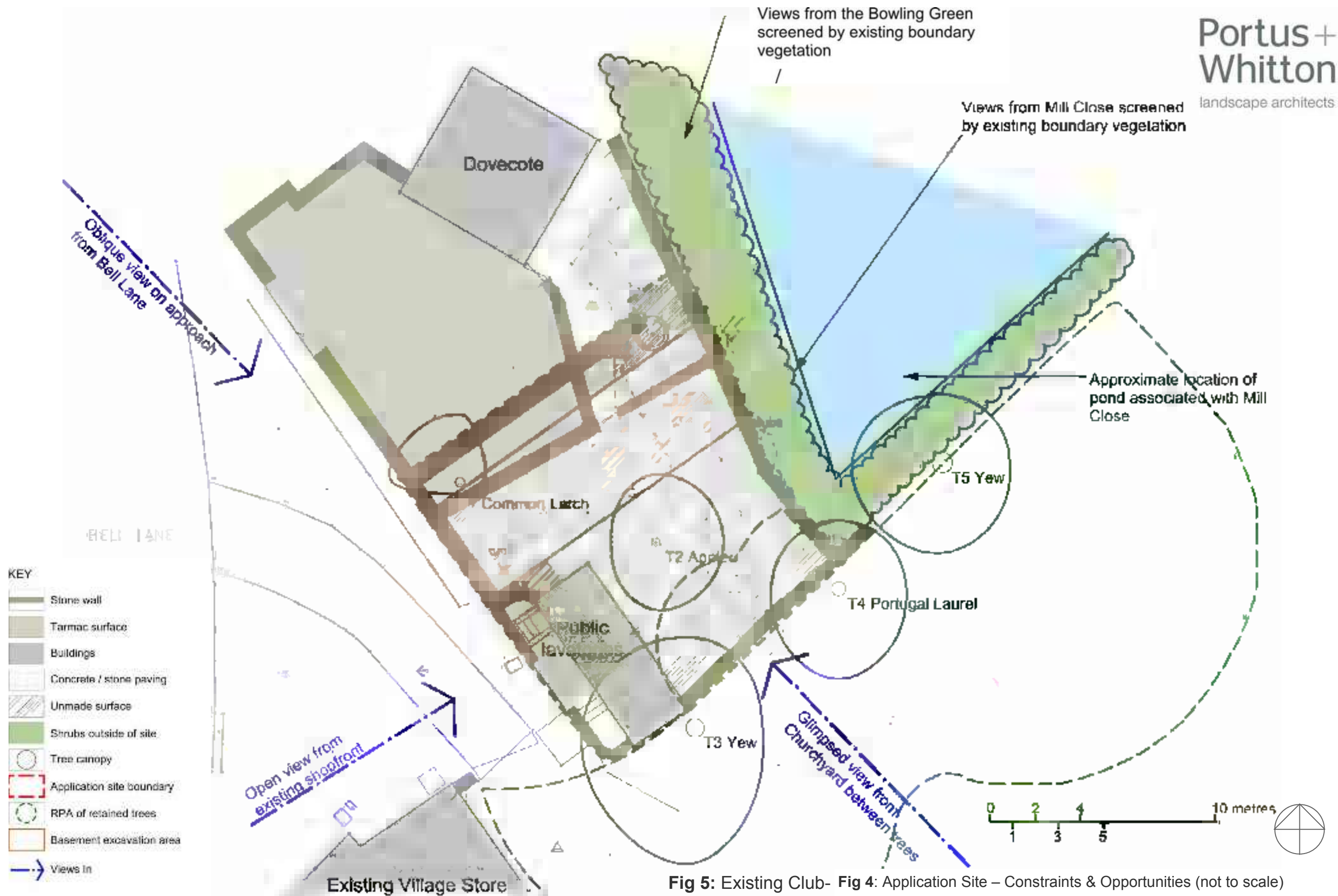


Fig 5: Existing Club- Fig 4: Application Site – Constraints & Opportunities (not to scale)

6. The Development Proposals

- 6.1 The proposals allow for the relocation of the community shop from its current location of the old school building to a new purpose built structure on the site of the current public lavatories.
- 6.2 The new building will incorporate the Post Office, Village Shop and Cafe whilst also providing the public conveniences which will continue to be open in line with the currently provided service.
- 6.3 The building will be of Cotswold stone construction incorporating the existing boundary walls (rebuilt where necessary) and a pitched, stone tiled roof.
- 6.4 The western elevation of the building will largely front onto the street although the main entrance will be recessed back to allow for a small sheltered terrace to be located to the front of the building.
- 6.5 The footings of the building will be piled lintels designed to over-sail the identified root protection areas of the retained trees. The process by which this will happen is as follows:
 - 1- Identification of major root systems through onsite investigations (potentially using a mix of hand dig and 'air spade' methods) to produce a working plan of on-site roots.
 - 2- Production by Engineer / Architect of a piling plan that respects the tree root systems on site.
 - 3- Design and provision of irrigation and ventilation to the over-sailed area.
- 6.6 The proposals will allow for the provision of a suitable irrigation plan for the root systems identified on site. The system will utilise surface water runoff collected from the terrace area to the front of the building through a system of gulleys and filters. This system will be designed to be maintainable in-perpetuity.
- 6.7 The proposals include a basement area to the northern extent of the building that will house the store for the shop and cafe. This is outside the identified root protection areas but to ensure the protection of adjacent tree roots a comprehensive method statement regarding excavations for the basement will be produced.



6. Assessment of Impacts

Visual Impacts

- 6.1 The visual survey was made in clear weather during February 2011. 5 viewpoints were selected as being representative of general public views of the application site. A detailed assessment of each view is given on the following pages.
- 6.2 The existing public lavatories are only visible from locations along Bell Lane. Whilst the existing building is constructed of traditional materials matching the vernacular of the village as a whole the building does not add to its setting. (see viewpoints 1 & 3)
- 6.3 The application site first becomes visible as it is approached from the north adjacent to Churchill Close. Open views of the site are then available as the site is approached along Bell Lane until the road turns south west towards the High Street level with the existing Village Shop. (see viewpoints 1, 2 & 3)
- 6.4 When approached from Bell Lane the site is backed by the trees of the churchyard which form a dense backdrop to the existing public lavatory building. These trees are of sufficient size to continue to provide a backdrop for the development proposals.
- 6.5 Views from the west across Bell Lane are open but are somewhat mitigated by the existing trees of the churchyard and vegetation associated with the Mill Pond to the east which provide a backdrop to the existing building. Shrubs along the western boundary adjacent to the Mill Pond will be unaffected by these proposals.
- 6.6 Views from Mill Close and other locations east and north east of the application site are screened by existing vegetation. Although the building is of a larger mass and height than the existing building screening will still be effective from these locations.
- 6.7 Views from the church and churchyard are limited. From the church there are small gaps in the boundary vegetation which will allow glimpsed views of the building proposals. From the northern entrance to the churchyard the frontage of the existing lavatory building is clearly visible but is set against a backdrop (in the spring and summer at least) of the Lime trees associated with Churchill Close.
- 6.8 The visual survey found no other locations (accessible to the general public) from which the site can be viewed.

Any impacts are therefore limited to locations along Bell Lane and from within the Churchyard.

- 6.9 The selected viewpoints are assessed individually on the following pages. **In summary, this assessment finds that the proposals would generally result in a slight to moderate positive change to the views with no adverse impact.**

Landscape Impacts

- 6.10 The proposed development would cause no material harm to existing natural features. Impacts on the physical landscape are limited to the removal of two on site trees and few low value shrubs.
- 6.11 The proposed building would replace a smaller building of low architectural merit that adds little to its setting. The replacement shop and cafe is designed as a well researched building, constructed with vernacular materials in keeping with its setting.
- 6.12 Likely impact to the settings of listed buildings would be limited to the Church, Paxton House, the former Post Office, the building of St. Georges Terrace and the former school which currently houses the Village Shop. Northern elevations of the Church are screened by the Churchyard vegetation and thus the built form will not be visually contiguous. Similarly Paxton House and the former Post Office are visually separated from the application site so as to not form a single view from any particular location. Therefore the impact on their setting will be slight. The buildings of St. Georges Terrace (to the north) provide the backdrop when viewing the application site from the entrance of the churchyard. Only the former school building will have a significant impact to its setting but the proposed shop will have aesthetic benefits over the public lavatories particularly the way in which the building is integrated into the site and how it addresses itself to key views.
- 6.13 **In summary these proposals would result in a beneficial impact on landscape character, public amenity** and the setting of listed buildings.

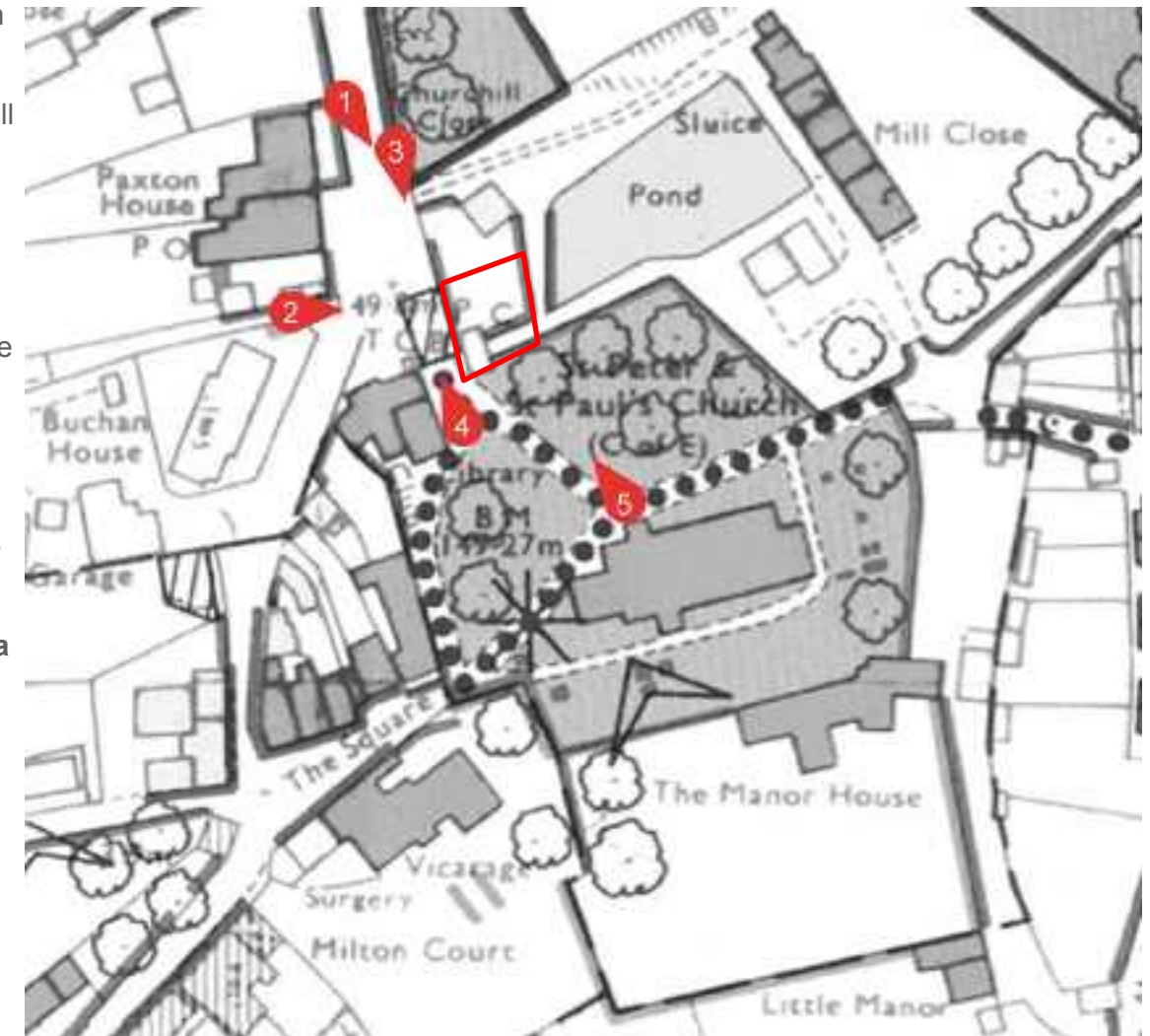
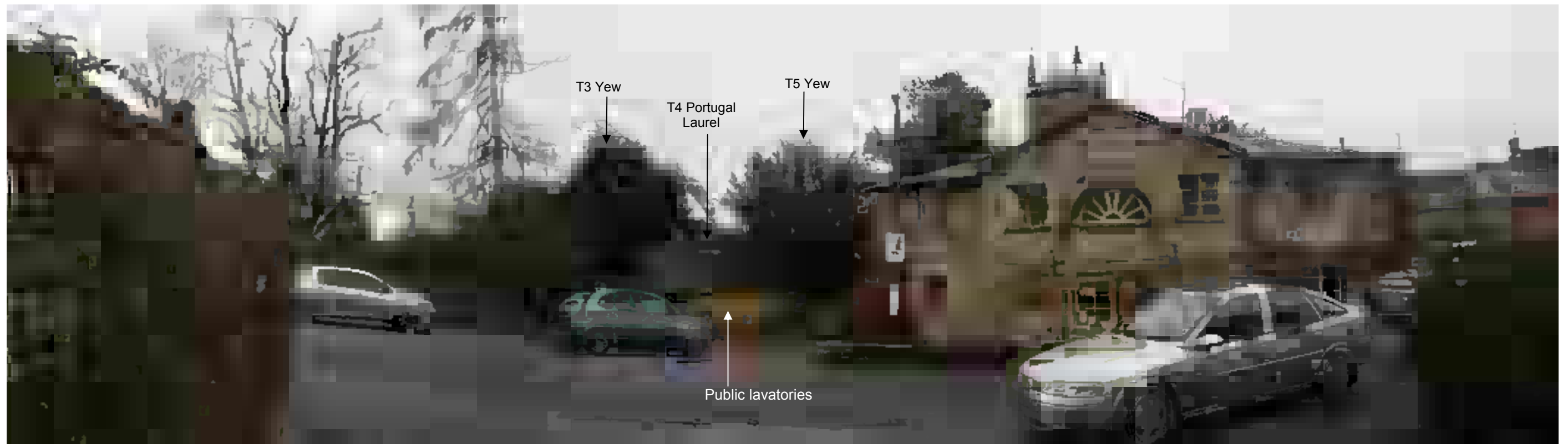


Fig 6: Location of views (not to scale)



1 View South east towards the Church of St. Peter & St. Paul from Bell Lane. The existing lavatory building is visible although partially screened by the Larch tree which will be removed as part of these proposals. The backing vegetation provided by T3, T4 and T5 can be clearly identified and is of sufficient scale to provide a useful backdrop to the proposed building. **There would be a moderate change to this view with a slight beneficial impact.**



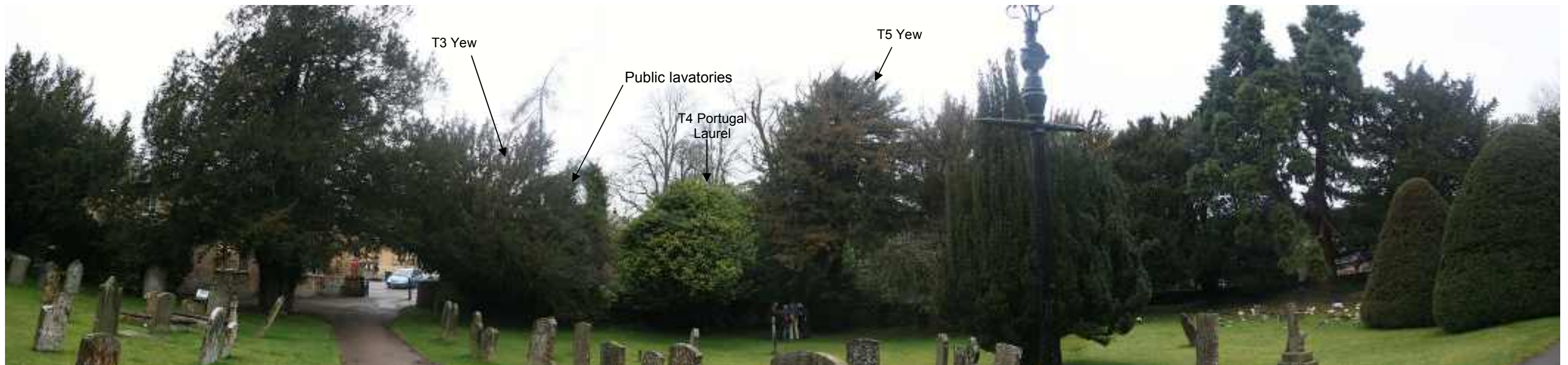
2 View east towards the application site from Bell Lane. The existing lavatory building is clearly visible against a backdrop of vegetation although it adds little to its setting. The backing vegetation provided by T3, T4 and T5 can be clearly identified and is supported by additional vegetation from shrubs associated with the mill pond to the east. The existing shop building is clearly visible in this view but would benefit from the replacement of the existing building with a well designed building that sits comfortably in the architectural context. **There would be a significant change to this view with a slight beneficial impact.**



3 View South towards the Church of St. Peter & St. Paul from Bell Lane. The existing lavatory building is visible although partially screened by the Larch tree which will be removed as part of these proposals. . **There would be a moderate change to this view with a slight beneficial impact.**



4 View north towards the application site and the Dovecote beyond. The existing lavatory building is openly visible although partially screened by the stone wall in the foreground. Elm house on St. George's Terrace is visible in the background but the Lime trees adjacent to Churchill close will play a much greater screening role when in full leaf. **There would be a moderate change to this view with a slight beneficial impact.**



5 View northwest towards the application site from the Church of St. Peter & St. Paul. The existing lavatory building is not visible due to the screening effect of trees T3, T4, and T5. The uneven growth of the crown to T3 and the major pruning operations it has undergone have left it small in comparison to other Yew trees of a similar age in the churchyard. A programme of remedial programme of sympathetic pruning and the safeguarding of its root system should see the mass of its canopy increasing in future years thus providing additional screening. A small gap between T3 and T4 will result in there being a limited glimpsed view of the proposed building. This will be mitigated over time by the continued growth of the canopies to T3 and T4. **There would be a slight change to this view with a slight beneficial impact**

7. Summary & Conclusions

- 7.1 The application site occupies a sensitive location within the Blockley Conservation Area. It is a relatively small rectangle of land which currently provides the site for the village's public lavatories.
- 7.2 The main components of the proposed development are the demolition of the existing lavatory building and its replacement with a new building to house the village shop, Post Office, cafeteria and new public conveniences.
- 7.3 This assessment finds that, notwithstanding the sensitivity of the location, it is only visible from relatively few public viewpoints. In most instances the trees along the site's southern boundary with the churchyard play a major visual screening role.
- 7.4 Key to the success of the proposed development will be the retention of the trees on the southern boundary of the site (namely T3, T4 and T5 as identified in the arboricultural report). These proposals allow for the systematic identification of the root systems for these trees, the bespoke design of a suitable layout for pile and lintel foundations that will avoid damage to the roots and a sustainable method by which the root systems can continue to be provided with adequate air and moisture.
- 7.5 The new building will reflect the general pattern of building in Blockley and although larger than the existing public lavatory building, is in proportion to the existing landscape and built form. It will incorporate materials in accordance with those traditionally used in this part of the village. The proposed building will be located on its site in a similar way to the general pattern of building, indeed the inclusion of a terrace to the front of the new shop will echo the stepped back nature of the facade of the existing toilet block.
- 7.6 Existing stone walls identified as 'important' by the Conservation Area Statement will be repaired, relocated and or incorporated into the new building.
- 7.7 By locating the new building level with the adjacent street the public conveniences incorporated as part of these proposals have a greater accessibility and will be DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant.
- 7.8 Impacts on the settings of listed buildings are limited to a very small number of locations as previously identified in this report.

Where impacts are expected they have been judged to be slight.

- 7.9 When viewed as a package these proposals are in line with the objectives of the Blockley Conservation Area Statement which provides guidance on how the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of Blockley Conservation Area can be achieved.
- 7.10 **In summary these proposals would result in a beneficial impact on landscape character, public amenity and the setting of listed buildings.**